DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 252 249 JC 840 614

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TITLE Prerequisites and Remediation in the Humanities: An Administrative Point of View.
PUB DATE Nov 84
NOTE 16p.; Paper presented at the Annual Conference of the Community College Humanities Association, Western-Pacific Division (5th, San Diego, CA, November 8-10, 1984).
PUB TYPE Speeches/Conference Papers (150) -- Viewpoints (120)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Academic Standards; Community Colleges; *Curriculum Development; Grades (Scholastic); *Humanities Instruction; *Prerequisites; Reading Ability; Remedial Programs; Two Year Colleges
IDENTIFIERS *Bakersfield College CA

ABSTRACT

There have been broad, and effective efforts in recent years to strengthen the humanities; however, there are still many problems, questions, and disagreements--especially in the areas of standards and competencies--to be resolved. Current legislative and board attention to standards provides an impetus for a serious review of current practices to ensure that institutional integrity is protected, that students are dealt with honestly and supportively, and that the academic position of community colleges is clearly established. Community college leaders must address these issues and prepare for imminent changes in student characteristics and educational roles. A serious lack of non-transfer or pre-college level humanities courses and a lack of specific and appropriate prerequisites for transfer-level courses discourage students from becoming interested in the humanities and call into question the academic/baccalaureate level of the courses. As evidenced by reading test scores and course outcomes of students at Bakersfield College, most students who lack the skills to enroll in college-level humanities courses screen themselves out of these courses; and those who do enroll have little chance of success. By providing humanities courses at levels appropriate to the skills of the students, community colleges can attract students to the humanities and improve accountability to students, governing boards, agencies, and state legislatures. (LAL)

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Prerequisities and Remediation in the Humanities: An Administrative Point of View

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Presented at the Community College Humanities Association Conference, Nov. 1984

There have been broad efforts in recent years to strengthen the humanities, to encourage new interdisciplinary approaches, to encourage more inclusion of humanities within vocational areas and to generally make students and the public more aware of the importance of the humanities. These efforts seem to have results - at least enrollments and institutional priorities have started to swing back to the humanities.

Within the area of humanities, however, we still have many problems, questions and disagreements. Now is the time to move to resolve as many of these as possible. Even while we take a look at ourselves we can't help to be aware, also of the great national attention placed upon schools and colleges. This attention primarily focuses on standards and competencies. Local and state boards as well as state legislatures have been busily drafting mission statements, new and increased graduation requirements, and fortunately helpful to the humanities, more comprehensive and meaningful requirements in general education.

Included in this is also the aspect of reviewing standards for college admission, for entrance into or completion of associate programs, and particularly standards for baccalaureate courses and programs.

This review of standards should give us cause to seriously review current practices to ensure that we (as community college leaders and movers) protect the integrity of our institutions, deal honestly and supportively with students, and clearly establish our academic position with four-year colleges and universities.

We must address these issues, first, because it is simply in our own best interests to do so before others do it for us (and there are many waiting on the wings to do so), but second, because we need to be prepared and on solid ground before we become overwhelmed with the changes standing immediately before us. And changes are coming.

California is a case in point. California is first, nationally, in population; first in the number and percentage of Hispanics, second in the number of Blacks, first in the number and percentage of foreign born. We are an "older" society with only 27% of our population under age 18 (compared with Utah at 37%).

Only 68% of our youth in California are completing high school (compared with 76.4% in 1976, 42.7% of elementary school enrollments are minorities, and by 1990 California's minority public school population will be 25% greater than the Anglo enrollment. By the year 2000, minorities and women, taken together, will comprise something like two-thirds of our national population.

These statistics must be considered in the light of the fact that currently the Hispanic population is about fifty percent less likely to go to college than the rest of the population; women, Blacks, Hispanics, and Native Americans receive far fewer baccalaureate and post-graduate degrees than their population totals should indicate and this country can afford. Minorities are particularly under-represented in engineering, biological science, physical science and mathematics.

Couple these with clear population projections of increasing longevity, creating another significant issue as to whether this society can stand to have so many healthy people, with substantial life ahead of them, not working and thus requiring support from those currently in the workforce. We must be prepared to help senior adults to remain in the workforce - at least part-time - as long as possible. Younger people too, will need more continuing education opportunities to update skills required for this modern society - a society facing unprecedented change and opportunities. And, more important than "skills," will be the need to broadly educate the population in order for us, as a society, to understand who we are, what we are, and where we're going. And to understand how we, as individuals, can successfully contribute to such a society.

Nationally today only 26% of our workforce makes things. We are now a service dominated workforce and squarely in the middle of a dynamic international economy. Japan, for instance, is already planning by the year 2000 to have the need only for "knowledge" workers: people with significant and broad educational training.

Unless society dramatically and effectively addresses the questions posed by all the above, unless we ensure a quality education system with true life-long learning opportunities we can quickly become a sick society, with some of our population with education - and thus with opportunity - and many without either and thus without hope - always a dangerous basis for civil unrest.

What does this have to do with us? It seems pretty obvious, at least to me, that we need to reach more students. Yes, attract more students not only to college but directly into the humanities.

Right now it would appear that we, in fact, may be doing all we can to discourage students from becoming interested in the humanities. We also are very possibly bringing many of our courses into question as academic/baccalaureate classes. We are doing both because of a serious lack of non-transfer (or perhaps pre-college) level courses and the lack of specific and appropriate prerequisites for our transfer level courses.

One national survey indicated that only 15% of enrollments in community college humanities, composition, and mathematics were in courses for which there were prerequisites.[1]

We have had a steady decline in the academic preparation of our students and in the number graduating from high school. Instructors obviously have been increasingly concerned about their enrollments - and thus their jobs. But to encourage unqualified students to take transfer level courses by the process of not requiring prerequisites is not only begging the question, it is simply unfair to those students who are forced to give up in despair.

Attrition rates in the humanities is often between 30 and 50%. I suggest to you that this is not fair - nor humanitarian. 60% of enrollments in mathematics and a good 35% (much more in some colleges) in English composition are at remedial levels.[2] Why not in the rest of the humanities?

If you look around the country you really find few non-transfer/remedial/pre-college courses in the humanities - and certainly you will find few which are taught in such a way as to help students with specific needs in writing or reading - the two major problem areas for humanities students.

"In an effort to increase the likelyhood that academically underprepared students will enroll in and successfully complete liberal arts courses, a number of colleges have initiated programs that incorporate reading, writing, and study skills instruction into college-level content courses."[3]

This helps one aspect of the problem. However - and now specifically from the point of view of an administrator whose responsibilities include supervision over the humanities and articulation with the state colleges and universities in General Education areas - we obviously have considered ourselves, and prided ourselves on being the College of Last Resort. Even so, few students participate in a liberal arts course except to meet specific requirements. Students who are weak in writing and reading tend to avoid these courses because of their weaknesses. Certainly few participate in these courses to develop basic learning skills such as reading, English, or Math.[4]

In a study of the Los Angeles District,[5] one-third of the students did not feel confident in their ability to utilize such basic skills as reading, writing and mathematics. I suspect the figure may, in reality, be much higher. Most of these students screen themselves out of true humanities courses.

However, as we have already stated, many do enroll who have little chance of success. I maintain that is because of our lack of standards - namely proper prerequisities. If the College of Last Resort has no standards, how are we to account to ourselves, our students and our governing boards, agencies, legislatures, etc.?

If we have no prerequisites for obviously college-level courses, what recourse does the high school have to encourage students to voluntarily take appropriate preparation programs? What is there in the nature of sanctions as far as the high schools are concerned? What sanctions, also, might four-year colleges and universities place on the College of Last Resort which has no standards?

How do we encourage students to take non-transfer classes if the transfer classes have no prerequisites? Can we offer non-transfer classes which add supplementary help in reading and writing? Should we?

Currently I have a specific dilemma. I am asked to certify to the state college system in California that our courses proposed by the faculty to meet state college General Education requirements not only do so but are really taught at the baccalaureate level. Let me read to you from Executive Order 342, California State Colleges and Universities, dated April 1, 1981, and specifying this kind of certification.

> "In certifying the completion of a portion of the CSUC General Education-Breadth requirements. . . all courses and examinations. . . are to be baccalaureate level and be designed for students who possess the basic competence in the English language and mathematical computation which may reasonably be expected of entering college students. . ." (emphasis added)

Or let me read to you from the "University of California - Community College Course Articulation Agreements" (1984);

> "Courses listed as transferable are accepted at the point of admission for unit credit in partial satisfaction of the degree requirements of the University of California. The University accepts community college courses for unit credit which are comparable to courses it offers to its own freshmen and sophomore students . . . These courses must have the purpose, scope, and debth to make them appropriate to fill University degree requirements. (emphasis included on original)

Would you be willing to certify that your transfer courses are designed only for students "who possess the basic competencies in the English language and mathematical computation which may reasonable be expected of entering college students"?

Can you offer some proof that they are? Do you require a SAT or other score to qualify for your courses? Do you have a reading or writing competency level? If you do, your catalogs don't show it.

I ask again - would you be willing to certify? You ask your administration to do so. Can you certify that your courses are comparable to university courses in purpose, scope and debth? How can you prove it when one-half of your enrollees can't qualify for the university?

What are you going to do when the four year colleges and universities (as they are beginning to do in California) ask for specific course outlines to determine if the courses are designed for students who possess the basic competencies and if they are really comparable to courses offered to University freshmen and sophomores?

What are you going to do when they note the complete lack of prerequisites? Often university courses do not list prerequisites either, but the students had to meet specific academic requirements to enter the university in the first place.

We are in an era of tremendous competition for students. Are we placing ourselves in a position to be challenged as lower division transfer institutions? Unfortunately, I believe we are.

But back to our basic and primary concern: The Student.

At Bakersfield College we have been testing our students to compare reading level with course completion. I would like to share some of these with you.

I first have to tell you that early on we discovered that persons reading at the 5th or 6th grade level did not conceptualize anywhere near the level of students reading at the 10th or 11th grade levels or above. In actuality this was inaccurate in that students reading at the 5th or 6th grade level could conceptualize, provided they do so in verbal terms.

Unfortunately, most of our testing methods in the humanities are not of the verbal variety. We have written exams, multiple choice, essay etc. These discriminate against the poor reader and the poor writer.

But the results of our testing are still very significant - even if not overwhelming.

The tests for reading used were the Davis Reading Test and the Minnesota Reading Assessment (Form A) (MRA), and we also used the Iowa test of Educational Development (ITED).

The Minnesota Reading Assessment test is what you will be looking at in these data files, the correlation between the tests was exceptional.

It is difficult, if not impossible, to be completely precise on comparing reading scores with grade level but it is generally accepted that the following grade-level breakdown is appropriate for the MRA:

Level A - 11th grade and above	73-90
Level B - 9th and 10th grade	58-72
Level C - 5th grade and below	30-57

The first Data File (Exhibit I) shows social science courses. You will note that we have broken down the reading ranges in several ways. The important aspect to note is that successful completion of these courses drops dramatically with the lowering of reading test scores. This is even after many students have already screened themselves out. In the 8th grade and below category, the success possibilities are definitely less than 50/50.

The second Data File (Exhibit II) includes only Art classes, most of which are performance classes. You will note that reading scores are far less important. Another factor in the success rate for these classes besides the performance vs. academic reading and writing may well be inner motivation, self-fulfillment, etc.

The third Data File (Exhibit III) is for several sections of Health Science 1, a required course for graduation. Fairly significant reading is required - with pretty disastrous results. Also note how few poor readers are present.

The fourth Data File (Exhibit IV) includes several sections of Biology 11, an introductory science class with prerequisites of entry placement exams and/or previous biology in high school or college. Poor readers still have major problems but very few of them qualify for the course in the first place.

Introduction to Philosophy, the fifth (Exhibit V) is Philosophy 6a - which has a "recommended" prerequisite of eligibility for transfer level English composition. Poor readers did somewhat better but, again, very few attempted the class.

The sixth (Exhibit VI) is Music Appreciation (22a-c) which does not have a catalog prerequisite but which is well-known as a fairly tough transfer level class. Again, students screened themselves out, but the three readers at 8th grade and below were in real trouble.

The seventh (Exhibit VII) is English 1b which students do not usually attempt until after completing English 1a. Very few poor readers reach this level.

The final Data File (Exhibit VIII) is a mix of non-transfer and entry level transfer classes in English and Speech. While this does not differentiate between levels, it does point out the problems of the poor reader once again.

Reading is not the only criteria nor a panacea to anything. These results, however, indicate that the poor reader and poor writer (which is the correlary) need special support and special help even in non-transfer level classes.

I believe we should not even be talking about them in transfer level classes. Certainly one of the instructional techniques we use which allows a number of poor readers to pass is that we essentially verbally tell them what they have to know to pass the class. Should we be taking time to do this at the expense of the capable students? Again, I think not.

Let's work creatively to serve the students we attract. Let's not dilute quality or give discouraged students another failure.

Now is the time to work on these problems. We cannot afford to allow so many students to avoid the humanities. I can't believe that with creative brainstorming and unified action we can't develop humanities courses at levels appropriate to the abilities of our students. Perhaps much more team work between the humanities areas is a key to that development.

As one administrator speaking for himself, I can tell you, I'm ready to help. You're the curriculum experts. Let's work together to impact this society; it is critically necessary to do so.

Footnotes

1. Friedlander, Jack, "Increasing Student Participation in the Liberal Arts," Advancing the Liberal Arts (New Directions for Community Colleges), Number 42, June, 1983, p. 23.

2. Ibid., p. 26

3. Ibid., p. 26

4. Ibid., p. 19

5. Ibid., p. 20

EXHIBIT I

REPORT FOR DATA FILES:

HIST 17A	HIST 17B	HIST 18A
HIST 18B	HIST 20A	HIST 20B
HIST 30A	HIST 30B	ECON 1
ECON 2	POL S 1	SOC S 51

WHICH CONTAIN 1006 RECORDS.

READING RANGE	GRADES					
	A	B	C	D	F	W
78-90	113	160	149	35	26	69
73-77	10	27	53	18	14	24
67-72	5	17	38	19	8	15
58-66	5	13	27	19	8	12
40-57	3	5	31	20	12	17
30-39	0	5	10	4	9	6

****

READING RANGE	GRADES					
	A	B	C	D	F	W
73-90	123	187	202	53	40	93
58-72	10	30	65	38	16	27
30-57	3	10	41	24	21	23

****

READING RANGE	GRADES		
	ABC	DF	W
73-90	512	93	93
58-72	105	54	27
30-57	54	45	23

****

SUMMARY

RANGE	GRADES			
	ABC	%	DFW	%
A 73-90	512	73	186	27
B 58-72	105	56	81	44
C 30-57	54	44	68	56

****

EXHIBIT II

REPORT FOR DATA FILES:

ART 13A	ART 13AB	ART 2AB
ART 2CD	ART 3AB	ART 4CD
ART 5AB	ART 7AB	ART 9AB
ART 9CD	ART 2EF	ART 2GH
ART 7CD	ART 7GH	ART 13CD
ART 17CD		

WHICH CONTAIN 96 RECORDS.

READING RANGE	GRADES					
	A	B	C	D	F	W
78-90	18	10	3	1	0	7
73-77	0	4	1	0	0	0
67-72	5	2	1	0	0	0
58-66	1	4	3	0	0	8
40-57	4	5	6	0	1	1
30-39	0	3	4	1	0	3

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READING RANGE	GRADES					
	A	B	C	D	F	W
73-90	18	14	4	1	0	7
58-72	6	6	4	0	0	8
30-57	4	8	10	1	1	4

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READING RANGE	GRADES		
	ABC	DF	W
73-90	36	1	7
58-72	16	0	8
30-57	22	2	4

****

SUMMARY

RANGE	GRADES			
	ABC	%	DFW	%
A 73-90	36	82	8	18
B 58-72	16	67	8	33
C 30-57	22	79	6	21

****

EXHIBIT III

REPORT FOR DATA FILE HL SC 1.

WHICH CONTAINS 82 RECORDS.

READING RANGE	GRADES					
	A	B	C	D	F	W
78-90	8	8	7	2	3	13
73-77	2	4	3	3	1	1
67-72	0	1	3	2	1	1
58-66	0	1	1	2	0	4
40-57	0	0	2	2	0	4
30-39	0	0	1	1	0	1

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READING RANGE	GRADES					
	A	B	C	D	F	W
73-90	10	12	10	5	4	14
58-72	0	2	4	4	1	5
30-57	0	0	3	3	0	5

****

READING RANGE	GRADES		
	ABC	DF	W
73-90	32	9	14
58-72	6	5	5
30-57	3	3	5

****

SUMMARY

RANGE	GRADES			
	ABC	%	DFW	%
A 73-90	32	58	23	42
B 58-72	6	38	10	62
C 30-57	3	27	8	73

****

EXHIBIT IV

REPORT FOR DATA FILE BIOL 11.

WHICH CONTAINS 99 RECORDS.

READING RANGE	GRADES					
	A	B	C	D	F	W
78-90	15	12	24	4	2	6
73-77	3	4	6	1	1	1
67-72	1	0	4	0	0	0
58-66	0	1	3	2	1	0
40-57	0	1	2	3	0	1
30-39	0	0	0	0	1	0

****

READING RANGE	GRADES					
	A	B	C	D	F	W
73-90	18	16	30	5	3	7
58-72	1	1	7	2	1	0
30-57	0	1	2	3	1	1

****

READING RANGE	GRADES		
	ABC	DF	W
73-90	64	8	7
58-72	9	3	0
30-57	3	4	1

****

SUMMARY

RANGE	GRADES			
	ABC	%	DFW	%
A 73-90	64	81	15	19
B 58-72	9	75	3	25
C 30-57	3	38	5	62

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EXHIBIT V

REPORT FOR DATA FILE PHIL 6A.

WHICH CONTAINS 45 RECORDS.

READING RANGE	GRADES					
	A	B	C	D	F	W
78-90	8	12	5	0	1	3
73-77	0	4	3	0	0	0
67-72	0	0	1	0	0	0
58-66	1	1	1	1	0	1
40-57	0	0	2	1	0	0
30-39	0	0	0	0	0	0

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READING RANGE	GRADES					
	A	B	C	D	F	W
73-90	8	16	8	0	1	3
58-72	1	1	2	1	0	1
30-57	0	0	2	1	0	0

****

READING RANGE	GRADES		
	ABC	DF	W
73-90	32	1	3
58-72	4	1	1
30-57	2	1	0

****

SUMMARY

RANGE	GRADES			
	ABC	%	DFW	%
A 73-90	32	89	4	11
B 58-72	4	67	2	33
C 30-57	2	67	1	33

****

EXHIBIT VI

REPORT FOR DATA FILE MUSIC 22AC.

WHICH CONTAINS 32 RECORDS.

READING RANGE	GRADES					
	A	B	C	D	F	W
78-90	11	6	1	0	0	0
73-77	1	2	3	1	0	0
67-72	1	3	0	0	0	0
58-66	0	0	0	0	0	0
40-57	0	0	0	1	0	0
30-39	0	0	0	0	1	1

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READING RANGE	GRADES					
	A	B	C	D	F	W
73-90	12	8	4	1	0	0
58-72	1	3	0	0	0	0
30-57	0	0	0	1	1	1

****

READING RANGE	GRADES		
	ABC	DF	W
73-90	24	1	0
58-72	4	0	0
30-57	0	2	1

****

SUMMARY

RANGE	GRADES			
	ABC	%	DFW	%
A 73-90	24	96	1	4
B 58-72	4	100	0	0
C 30-57	0	0	3	100

****

EXHIBIT VII

REPORT FOR DATA FILE ENGL 1B.

WHICH CONTAINS 69 RECORDS.

READING RANGE	GRADES					
	A	B	C	D	F	W
78-90	12	21	14	1	1	8
73-77	0	2	1	0	1	2
67-72	1	1	0	3	0	1
58-66	0	0	0	0	0	0
40-57	0	0	0	0	0	0
30-39	0	0	0	0	0	0

* *

READING RANGE	GRADES					
	A	B	C	D	F	W
73-90	12	23	15	1	2	10
58-72	1	1	0	3	0	1
30-57	0	0	0	0	0	0

* *

READING RANGE	GRADES		
	ABC	DF	W
73-90	50	3	10
58-72	2	3	1
30-57	0	0	0

* *

SUMMARY

RANGE	GRADES			
	ABC	%	DFW	%
A 73-90	50	79	13	21
B 58-72	2	33	4	67
C 30-57	0	0	0	0

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EXHIBIT VIII

REPORT FOR DATA FILES:

ENGL 60 ENGL 64 ENGL 1
ENGL 1A SPCH 1 SPCH 2
SPCH 51

WHICH CONTAIN 1482 RECORDS.

READING RANGE	GRADES A	B	C	D	F	W
78-90	144	207	176	23	43	93
73-77	15	61	67	17	14	27
67-72	10	41	52	15	8	19
58-66	9	33	67	25	15	37
40-57	8	38	50	44	14	34
30-39	9	7	16	14	9	21

****

READING RANGE	GRADES A	B	C	D	F	W
73-90	159	268	243	40	57	120
58-72	19	74	119	40	23	56
30-57	17	45	66	58	23	55

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READING RANGE	GRADES ABC	DF	W
73-90	670	97	120
58-72	212	63	56
30-57	128	81	55

****

SUMMARY

RANGE	GRADES ABC	%	DFW	%
A 73-90	670	76	217	24
B 58-72	212	64	119	36
C 30-57	128	48	136	52

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